

Armenian Literature Classes in Public High Schools: Understanding the Preference for
Canonical Literature

By

Arusyak Gharagyozyan

Presented to the

Department of English & Communications

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts

American University of Armenia

Yerevan, Armenia

May 15, 2020

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Abstract

Literature is one of the most important fields that carries and encompasses history and art. It's a constantly changing sphere that is influenced by time, meaning while times are changing the literature should also evolve along with us. But is it the case for Armenian literature? This research aims to analyze the representation of Armenian literature through high school textbooks. The preference for the authors and literary works included in the textbooks, the omissions and misinterpretations are of primary concern. Armenian literature is one of the mandatory subjects taught at schools. It has an impact in shaping the worldview and mentality of the younger generation and as such in our times it is essential to have diverse, inclusive and non-stereotypical representation of literature.

Introduction

One of the primary subjects taught at schools and colleges in Armenia is the Armenian literature class. Throughout the years, despite economical difficulties and political agitation as well as oppressed intellectual freedom during the Soviet Union era, Armenian literature remained a valuable cultural heritage. It's not surprising that literature became one of the fundamental subjects to educate younger generations and nurture the sense of pride and belonging of Armenian culture. In recent years however, there were a lot of speculations and complaints among the students that the overall education system is too complicated, subjects are taught in a complex academic language, students just don't want to learn. Throughout my school years, though Armenian literature was one of my favorite subjects I couldn't help but notice how students at my school were always bored. Though the literary works that we were reading and learning were interesting, the overall class, the biographies and the textbook itself was mildly said, dull. Transforming from middle to high school myself I didn't notice any difference. It wasn't until university when the difference made sense. In college the Armenian literature class (which is compulsory for all universities) was introduced in a completely different way. It included reading modern Armenian literature, non-canonical literature, discussing topics of feminism, sexuality, patriotism in Armenian literature. These were the things we had never touched upon in schools. A lot of the responses from the students at the beginning were negative. Many thought contemporary novels looked like amateur blog posts, the poetry was a product of laziness (since many didn't have rhymes and were in free forms). Modern poetry proves that

poetry should not be limited. They can be free without any rhymes because each word is irreplaceable and carries value, so sometimes just for the sake of rhymes we might lose the creative aspect of the poems (Grigoryan, 1970). Very often discussions would just lead to solid disagreements or students wouldn't want to participate. Thus, it wasn't until college when I started to notice the way subjects, particularly Armenian literature is taught at schools. Students never have discussions, never learn about the authors' personal lives, thoughts, letters. In the textbooks and by the teachers they are always portrayed idealistic, noble *men*. These experiences led to see how modern Armenian literature and other artistic spheres are ignored nowadays, in a society where cultural heritage is so emphasized and valued ironically enough. The main reason for this ignorance lies in the Armenian education system, the way Armenian literature is taught in schools. Because of the lack of diversity (topics, genders, styles) students don't get the chance to fully explore Armenian literature and be properly educated on a variety of subjects which doesn't only lead to lack of knowledge and knowing how to learn but also lack of tolerance and critical thinking. It is important to mention that the system itself is not the only problem. The revised textbooks and curriculum should be taught by qualified teachers who are able to deliver the course properly and be open to debates and discussions. Even if the education system is changed but the teachers use the same outdated ways to teach the students, the result will be the same.

Literature Review

Though not many but there are a couple of studies and articles found that discuss the teaching of canonical and non-canonical literature in schools or generally literature taught in schools. One of the relevant ideas that is applicable for the Armenian case as well is the fact that generally schools “gloss over” the idea of *literary taste* (Gatti, 2011). Gatti asks questions like “Who decides what we read and what is good and with what reason? Why should we read the authors that were not appreciated by the public then?”(p. 48). She emphasizes that students don’t read or find boring certain literary texts not because of their intelligence or their ability to read but because students have *tastes*. This is the case for Armenian schools as well. There is little if any concern about what students like to read. There hasn’t been any survey or some kind of data that would determine the *tastes* of the school students in order to adjust the syllabus accordingly. Gatti mentions that her students were bored reading N. Hawthorne’s “Young Goodman Brown” and would ask why they are even reading that (2011). Very often textbooks don’t include information about the conversations or relationships of authors which is not only the most interesting part but also essential to understand the motives behind literary works. Similarly, Jane Coles (2013), a senior lecturer in education at Oxford Brookes, questions the idea of compulsory knowledge of Shakespeare and other canonical authors contributing to the democratizing process of the society. Coles claims that the government’s goal is to make sure that the students understand the value of “shared heritage” through Shakespeare. The author argues that studying Shakespeare’s literary image and his complex works, are an intact process for students.

According to her though the teachers try to make reading Shakespeare an “active” process it still remains passive as literary meanings are mediated by the teachers most of the time. Coles, included interviews with the students in her research. According to the students

Shakespeare is not only intellectually challenging but awareness about him and his works may also be an indicator in judging people's intellectual worth. Meaning, if a given person understands Shakespearean language and literary elements used by him, then he/she would be known as intelligent. The question is how this potential for intellectual validation can encourage or demotivate pupils. The author mentions that according to the research of National Curriculum Shakespeare is mentioned by the students of grades 8 and 9 as the reason for liking and disliking English, which makes Shakespeare a key person among other determinants in establishing course preferences (Coles, 2013, p. 57). Gatti's and Coles' research reminds the case of Khachatur Abovyan in Armenian textbooks. "Wounds of Armenia" is the first modern Armenian secular novel that puts ordinary people and their struggles as the main characters and storyline for the first time in literature. The novel, however, is pretty complex with its language. Students should have historical background knowledge, which they don't usually have. From my experience, teachers never exactly explained why we were reading it and only continued saying that it's one of the most important works in Armenian literature. Like Shakespeare, Abovyan is one of the key authors in Armenian canonical literature, but he always stays a distant figure for the students. However, even if the textbooks are adjusted accordingly in order to make the studying Abovyan an "active" process, the teachers play a crucial role here.

It's also important to mention that one of the reasons why non-canonical literature is perceived negatively is the lack of diversity in overall literature. While there are foreign language classes (English and Russian being primary), literature and cultural aspects are usually ignored and the main focus is on the language. During the Russian classes however, students do have parts dedicated to Russian authors whose works are strictly canonical. According to Heriberto Godina, a professor of literacy studies in Texas A&M International University,

oftentimes it is thought that non-canonical literature doesn't have academic value, which is a misconception (1996, p. 548). He states that it is important to give the students both perspectives and advice to use Lukens and Cline's "Critical Handbook of Literature" to correctly approach canonical and non-canonical literature at school (Godina, 1996). Continuing, Godina also mentions a growing number of multicultural books. In Armenia, in recent years there seems to be a boom of multicultural publications (from Turkish, Georgian authors to Western and Asian). It is important to further discuss what books, authors are translated and published, how they are promoted and sold.

Hovhannes Grigoryan is an Armenian author who similarly states that today, when more than ever people's senses are too tense and emotions are concrete, it is impossible to speak with rhyme. Now poetry means speaking (before it meant singing), speaking correctly. In this case, each word is irreplaceable in terms of its value, and since rhyming is a risk to compromise some words for overall appearance of the poem, it would now be more appropriate to choose the free form of poetry (Grigoryan, 1970).

Iveta Silova in her "Gender analysis of Armenian school curriculum and textbooks"(2016) indicates various facts and research showing the stereotypical representation of females in Armenian literature and history books. She also talks about how generally women's role is perceived in Armenian society and how it is connected with what she researched about. The facts and references provided in her article will be very helpful to back up some of the statements in my research paper, especially because there are very few academic papers talking about female portrayal in Armenian school curriculum. Similarly, Meri hovnanayan's article "Where Have the Women Gone?" (2017) is one of the few online magazine articles that addresses the absence of female writers in Armenian textbooks. She points out which writers are

included in the textbooks, interviews various people related to education and literature to understand the reasons behind the sexist preferences as well as back up statements by providing internationally accepted documents.

Esther Lombardi is a journalist who has written about books and literature for over two decades. In her article she discusses the origin of the word canon, how the canon changes over time and in different cultures (2019). Furthermore she considers the the cultural significance of the canon as well as the evolving definition of the canon in literature. Her ideas are essential to consider since they are relevant for any literature regardless of the country. Regarding the definition of the canon Eugene Ulrich Professor emeritus of Hebrew Scripture and Theology in the Department of Theology at the University of Notre Dame, in his “The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Developmental Composition of the Bible” (2015) thoroughly discusses the meaning and of canon in religion.

In conclusion, nowadays, non-canonical Armenian literature is often perceived negatively by the society. The answer lies in Armenian education system and how Armenian literature is taught at schools. If in previous times, it would be explained by Soviet education system which was very limiting and strict about choosing “appropriate” literary works, now it’s different. Teachers give preference to canonical literature which is more “appropriate.” The authors, majority of whom are males, are always described as perfect, noblemen. This leads to the students having a certain image about the writers, arts and overall literature. In turn Armenian contemporary literature suffers and Armenia might lose one of the important aspects of its culture: literature.

Research Questions

This research is focused on understanding the preference for canonical literature in Armenian high schools. The following are the research questions that this capstone project aims to answer:

- What is the canon? What do we mean by saying preference for canonical literature?
- What are some of the issues regarding Armenian high school textbooks in regards to structure and content?
- What are some of the issues regarding inclusivity of female writers, diasporan authors and female characters in the literary works included in the textbooks?
- What are the reasons behind the preference for canonical literature?
- How does it negatively affect overall Armenian literature as a cultural heritage?

Methodology

The literature review and the research questions above clearly indicated the need to conduct surveys and interviews with people related to the field of literature as there is little to no information regarding the topic. One of the main goals of the methodology was to closely analyze the textbooks of 10th, 11th and 12th grades. Because of the current situation of the 2019-2020 coronavirus pandemic and the lockdown, some of the initially planned activities regarding the research were limited and not implemented. The ones that were realized and the ones that were not, will be mentioned below.

Content analysis

One of the first things for the research was to analyze Armenian literature textbooks. The textbooks that were analyzed were of 10th, 11th and 12th grades. It's important to note that the 10th and 12th grade textbooks are used for the students in humanitarian studies programs while the 11th grade textbook is used in science based classes. There's little difference in the content of the textbooks meant for different programs since the main difference is the course hours meant for each high school program. Since thorough analysis of the literature textbooks of middle school would be too complex and big for one person, I have chosen only the used in high school curriculum. One of the issues was that there's no diversity in the textbooks used to teach literature in Armenia. Many textbooks are outdated and are not being updated often. The analysis focuses on the writers, common elements of their biographies, works (style, topics), pictures.

Which works are chosen and why? How often are textbooks updated and are there any significant changes? Does the content stay the same? Are the literary works canonical? Do they challenge stereotypes (traditional gender roles, romance)? Do the biographies include personal lives of the writers, their relationships, sexuality, scandals, character traits? Who is the latest writer included in the literature book? Are there any contemporary writers included? These were the main questions that are considered in the analysis.

The research also included looking at academic studies, regarding the preference for canonical literature in Western education system. Is there a bias of canonical literature in non-Armenian schools? Are there articles or studies that discuss the preference for canonical literature in public schools in Europe or the US. Are there any critical articles mentioning that? Are there any writers that are left out, non-canonical and thus not included in the curriculum?

Interviews (implemented partly because of the lockdown)

Interviews were to be conducted with one of the Armenian publishing houses' representatives. The data would be collected on what are the most sold Armenian language books, what are the most sold Armenian contemporary writers and works. The heads of the publishing houses would be interviewed. It would be interesting to discuss their thoughts regarding the canonical literature in Armenian education system. Questions that were supposed to be asked are as follows:

- Do they take measures to encourage the popularization of modern Armenian literature, if so, how?
- Why is canonical literature important?
- Have any of the houses published Armenian literature school textbooks?

- Do they have a say/involvement in Armenian literature subjects that are taught in schools.

Interviews were also planned to be conducted with Armenian school teachers. The questions generally were to be focused on their opinion on Armenian canonical literature, feminist literature, the curriculum, style of teaching, their preferences when it comes to teaching literature.

Some of the Armenian contemporary writers, critics and AUA literature professors were planned to be interviewed as well including the chief editor of Granish.org: the largest online collection of Armenian contemporary literature. This would give detailed insight as the opinions of those involved in the studies of Armenian literature both canonical and anon-canonical would be included.

An interview was conducted with Sona Mnatsakanyan, lecturer of Armenian Language and Literature in American University of Armenia. The interview was organized through video call and took about 40 minutes. Some of the main question Mnatsakanyan answered were as follows:

- What are some of the flaws/omissions in literature textbooks in your opinion?
- What and who makes the canon? Why are the works of female authors supposed to be alternative and non-canonical?
- What would you want to see in a high school textbook? What is your dream curriculum and why?

Research Findings and Analysis

Literature is told differently in any country. Growing up and attending educational institutions in Armenia, from schools to college, I have noticed many issues in the way the literature textbooks are structured and the ways literature is taught to students. This paper is focused on analyzing the Armenian literature textbooks from 10th, 11th and 12th grade. It also includes finding common issues throughout the three textbooks that are to be questioned and criticized: structure of the textbooks, inclusivity of female authors, analysis of the characters by the textbook authors, diversity in regards to the chosen authors.

The Canon

To answer the questions mentioned in the methodology section and understand the preference for canonical literature in the Armenian school system we need to firstly understand the canon itself. The origin of the word canon comes from Latin *canonicus* meaning “according to rule.” In modern English the first meaning is directly related to church: a regulation or dogma decreed by a church council (Merriam-Webster's collegiate dictionary, n.d.). In religion, the canon is the text or the books that a particular religious community views as the standard of judgement (Ulrich, 2015). As the world progresses, views and rules change, the canonical texts that were the standard before become “apocryphal,” meaning outside the frame of what’s thought to be representative (Lombardi, 2019).

In literature, the canon doesn’t change its core meaning. It can be defined as the collection of works or authors that are considered to be representative of a period or a genre (Lombardi, 2019). For instance, since William Shakespeare had a significant influence on

Western literature in terms of style and techniques, he became not only a part of the western canonical literature but in a sense the “father” of it.

However, with the world changing so dynamically, especially in the last couple of decades, the canon just like in religion, so as in literary context can't stay the same. Issues like feminism, race, social ones gained attention and are discussed in our daily life more than ever before. Logically since literature reflects the times we live in, it should accurately represent and include all the layers of social aspects. For a long time, Western canonical literature primarily consisted of white men. Since social issues such as gender, racial equality have become more important subjects of discussion, the need to adjust literature accordingly has also become essential. Literature is one of the most important and widespread mediums that people learn from, so it has to be as accurately proper to modern standards as possible. It is one of the primary subjects at schools. Students frame their worldview based on what they learn from school courses so literature is supposed to include whatever is representative of a certain society in a certain period of time. This has led to many discussions and debates among scholars, teachers and political figures involved in education. Some think that canonical literature is essential to preserve Western values and traditions. The teachers that want to incorporate non-canonical literature to their classes are often concerned about the practical aspect of the course. Sometimes non-canonical literary works are thought of having less academic value (Godina, 1996, p. 548). On the other hand, by studying the literary works of the past, people get a chance to look at those pieces from a new, modern perspective. For instance, “Song to myself” by Walt Whitman has become an important literary piece in gay literature.

Each canonical literature differs from culture to culture. Since the US is one of the most racially diverse countries, and the racial relations are relevant the representative literature should

also be very diverse. When it comes to Armenian literature, the explanation is more complex since the canonical literature was framed in the 100-150 years, it was influenced by Armenian history which includes a variety of incidents.

Common Features

As mentioned, to understand the preference for canonical literature in Armenian public high schools, this research is mainly based on the analysis of the literature textbooks of 10th, 11th and 12th grades. There are several common features that appear throughout the three textbooks and the goal is to answer the research questions through analyzing those. One of the common features is the structure of the books. How the texts (biographies, literary texts, analysis etc.) are placed. What are some of the omissions and issues related to the way the textbooks represent literature? Besides the structure, the analysis also focuses on the content. Which literary pieces are included, how are they analyzed, what kind of exercises are given?

Since the literary pieces are analyzed by the textbook authors in the textbooks, it is also important to consider how they are analyzed. For example, how the author analyzed the female characters in the given story. Additionally, because throughout history women were left out of the representation of Western literature, this research also analyzes the presence of female authors in the textbooks to understand the role of female authors in Armenian literature as well. Finally, diversity is another important aspect to be mentioned and analyzed. Though the textbooks are solely focused on Armenian literature, it is essential to analyze if the authors included are only those who were born and lived in Armenia. A lot of Armenian authors that started and continue their careers outside of Armenia can also be considered as “strangers” to canonical Armenian literature. The relations between Armenian diaspora and Armenia are tight,

so in terms of both authors based in Armenia and diasporan ones, the notion of inclusion would be necessary.

Structure of the textbooks

The core structure of the syllabus and Armenian literature textbooks are very similar if not the same throughout all school educational stages (elementary school, middle school, high school). The syllabus as well as the books are fully prepared by the Ministry of Education and science of Armenia and are mandatory for all public schools in the republic of Armenia. “The state general education program includes an exemplary curriculum, subject standards and programs, a list of guaranteed textbooks, and other legal acts ensuring the implementation of the program” (Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, 2009, article 7.4).

The analysis in this section is going to focus on the structure of the typical course process and the structure of the textbooks.

The class process is based on my personal experience, experiences of my classmates and friends who studied in different schools at the time. Throughout all school years from elementary to high school the course process had similar structure regardless of the teacher. I have interviewed Sona Mnatsakanyan who teaches “Armenian Language and Literature” at the American University of Armenia. She has taught in National Polytechnic University of Armenia and knows many teachers who work in schools. According to her the reason why the course process is the same is because teachers don’t have a variety of choices either. They are given a heavy program for the semester that they are supposed to finish and they don’t have a saying when it comes to choosing the authors or literary works. They don’t have much choice when it comes to teaching methods as well since they are under pressure from the ministry of education,

the school staff to deliver the course in a given period of time (personal communication, April 12, 2020). The main way to be graded was to learn the biographies of the authors which are primarily focused on dry facts e.g. years the author was born, where he/she went to school, some facts about personal and main canonical works. When it comes to literary works, students are supposed to learn almost all the poems included in the syllabus by heart. Thus, the course is mainly based on memorizing texts without analyzing or discussing and being graded on the fact of how accurate the student is able to paraphrase the text learned by heart. The written assignment consisted of either written paraphrasing or fact based tests regarding authors' biographies.

When it comes to discussing the structure of the textbooks, it's important to note that the high school program is basically aimed at giving students a chance to revise everything that they've learned in middle school. The authors included in the high school textbooks are also included in the textbooks of middle school. Thus, all the authors and their works are already familiar to students in high school. The first book (10th grade) starts with Mesrop Mashtots, who invented the Armenian alphabet in 405 AD. From then on, the content logically follows the flow of the history. After Mashtots, we have historians and their works, Armenian folklore, epic poem of "Daredevils of Sassoun," early forms of poetry such as tagh(s) (Armenian monodic songs, fables, ecclesiastical songs until the so called "Armenian new literature" period around from late 18th to 19th century. The 11th grade continues from the late of 19th century until the early 20th century Armenian literature. The 12th grade includes the Armenian literature from the 1940s until 2011.

All three books of 10th, 11th and 12th grades have essentially the same structure with minor differences. All three contain around 13-18 authors each with separate texts dedicated to

their biographies, major works and analysis.¹ Some authors that would be considered as non-canonical like female writers or writers of diaspora are all included only in the last section of the textbook under “Modern Armenian Literature” (Նորգույն շրջանի հայ գրականություն).²

It basically summarizes modern Armenian literature and includes just small paragraphs about the authors and their literature works. While canonical authors have a lot more space in the textbooks.³ In a sense, the structure of the textbooks complement the course process. The questions and exercises at the end of each text are dull and close-ended; they require fact-based answers that one can easily find in the text. They don’t encourage discussions, debates, or challenge ideas. Questions are generally as follows:

- “When was the author born?”
- “Describe this or that term”
- “Name some of the literary works by the author”
- “Learn by heart this or that poem/passage.”⁴

Female authors vs. male authors

As mentioned for the longest time western canonical literature consisted mostly of men. A conservative country like Armenia is not a stranger to that phenomenon. Even today, in Armenian society women are supposed to behave and talk in a certain, “accepted way.” The analysis of the textbooks and other sources as well as an interview with a lecturer of Armenian

¹ Check figure 1, 2, 3 in the appendices section

² Check figure 3 in the appendices section

³ Check Armenian literature textbook grade 12th p. 154-185

⁴ Check figures 4, 5, 6 in the appendices section

literature indicate that female authors are considered non-canonical in Armenian literature and the lack of equality in the representation of the literature also shows the presence of sexism in Armenian culture.

Throughout the three textbooks female authors are either only mentioned in the introduction (10th)⁵, not mentioned at all (11th grade) or appear only in the last pages of summary (12th grade).⁶

The 10th grade includes the first stages of Armenian literature. Most of the textbook is about the first Armenian translators, historians and philosophers all of whom are men. Note that even throughout the textbooks of Armenian history which contain primarily the same content regarding the education and literature of middle ages, no female historians or translators are mentioned as well. The 11th grade textbook doesn't include any female writers. The 12th grade textbook includes the modern Armenian authors covering the period from 1940s to 2010s. As mentioned female authors are only included in the last pages of the textbook under the summary of modern Armenian literature and the literature of Armenian diaspora. It's important to note that since the time of the coming summer holidays and the last parts of the book match, most of the time it is less likely that the students will even get to those parts. Towards the end of the school year, the classes generally are not as "intense" and organized, students tend to either skip school or just gloss over the texts rather than learn. Thus, the authors that are included in the last pages, including where most female authors are represented, are most of the time left out. Additionally, there are around 35 authors overall from which only 4 are female (Note: the canonical authors have a lot more space dedicated to them that includes their biographies, literary works, analysis

⁵ Check figure 7 in the appendices section

⁶ Check 12th Armenian literature textbooks p. 154-216

of their works and styles, while others have around 1-2 paragraphs which is the reason why it is hard to determine the exact number of authors in the book).

The textbooks don't discuss contributions of Armenian female writers to literature and never properly mention their creative legacy. Writers like Sybil and Srbouhi Dussap who had a big influence on the theory of the usage of vernacular in Armenian written language in 19th and 20th centuries are mentioned in a couple of sentences in the 10th grade textbook (Silova, 2016). If one asks a student in Armenia to name a female writer the answer would most probably be Silva Kaputikyan, one of the most prominent Armenian poets and political activists of the 20th century. Regarding the popularized image of specifically Silva Kaputikyan According to Mnatsakanyan the reason why Silva Kaputikyan is included is because she was still one of the canonical writers during the Soviet era. In other words, her literature corresponds to the aesthetics of the Soviet Union, she was a member of the Communist Party. The authors of the textbooks and the ministry of education had to choose someone [as a female representative], they had to show that there's a woman, she was in a sense convenient as cruel as it sounds. In contrast, Shushanik Kurghinian, for example, takes less space if any, because she is more of a revolutionary writer. She raised women's rights issues and so on (personal communication, April 12, 2020). Maybe because of her outspoken character about feminism Kurghinian would be considered too "risque" for a conservative country like Armenia. If someone is already bold and not afraid to raise certain issues, it would go against the Soviet regime's ideology which mostly sought to include the authors who were more non-controversial.

Omissions such as leaving out important female authors, belittles the value of Armenian literature and devalues the hard work of the writers. It gives the impression that literary accomplishments in Armenian literature are limited to men only. Female authors such as Zaruhi

Kalemkiarian, Shushanik Kurghinian, Zabel Yesayan, Iskuhi Minasian, Hermine Hovian, Sybil, Alene Terzian, Lola Koundakjian and many others who have pushed their creative work despite the social challenges and pressures are not acknowledged in the textbooks. It is essential to add diversity to the curriculum in order to have an accurate scope of Armenian literature and refrain from stereotypical representation of females to provide students quality education.

The cover pages of 10th and 12th grade textbooks include pictures, none of them include female writers.⁷ There are no pictures of any female writer inside the textbooks as well. As mentioned, each author included doesn't have equal space dedicated in the textbooks. Since female writers are only included in the concluding pages of the textbooks with short paragraphs dedicated to each of them, they don't have pictures. Another important thing to mention is that only the 10th grade textbook includes a couple of illustrations of the literary characters. Most of them are men. The ones that do have women are always with men (in the back) or illustrated in a disoriented way.⁸

Portrayal of female characters

Majority of the literary works included in the three textbooks have men as main characters while women are always wives or mothers of the leading characters. They are passive and submissive to husbands, fathers or brothers. It is important to discuss the portrayal of female characters in literary works in the textbooks. The close reading analysis of Armenian literature textbooks shows consistent gender bias and stereotypical representation of women. To understand how generally female characters are portrayed in the textbooks this research aims to

⁷ Check figures 8-11 in the appendices section

⁸ Check figures 12-14 in the appendices section

find connections with the way how Armenian society generally thinks of stereotypical female roles and how these stereotypical women are transformed into characters in Armenian literature.

It's essential to consider the connection between the portrayal of female characters in Armenian literature by writers and the analysis of female characters by the authors of the textbooks. Most of the literary works and authors in the textbooks are prominent so it's logical that they are included as canonical authors. However, especially at the time when these authors of the 18th-20th century were writing, the traditional roles of women and men in society were stereotypical and conservative. Thus, women are portrayed in distinct stereotypical ways by the writers as well. In a sense the critique regarding the way textbooks present females is not solely towards the authors of the textbooks. If there are no female characters in the literary works or if the women in literature pieces are represented in stereotypical ways, but the writers had a big influence on Armenian literature, the works and authors are still included in the textbooks. Thus the students still see women only in stereotypical roles. Additionally, as mentioned, the problem of the teaching methods of the teachers is especially crucial. They are the ones who can and should encourage discussions and debates regarding topics such as feminism and male/female stereotypes, as well as analyze the literary pieces from new perspectives. The bigger problem is not the way females were portrayed at the time, but that along with those literary works there are no other literature pieces that represent female characters in a more progressive way, in a new light.

The starting point of the discussion would be describing the stereotypical role of females in Armenian society. Obviously in today's world, there are many discussions, both casual conversations and scientific ones, regarding gender roles in society especially the role of women and how they are viewed. Armenia being a conservative country is no stranger to creating the

ideal standard of men and women based on stereotypes. The ideal standard of women in Armenia is highly associated with motherhood. They are the caretakers, always modest, always supportive and agreeable. Throughout history, Armenian women were always limited to certain characteristics, primarily things related to household chores. Even in modern day Armenia we see few women involved in areas such as politics or managerial positions (which seems to be a global phenomenon as well). In both developed and developing countries female characters are underrepresented. It is reported that students spend 80 to 95 percent of classroom time using textbooks while the teachers make most of their decisions regarding the instructions based on the textbook. Thus, both female and male characters are represented in such stereotypical ways that the girls and boys have constrained ideas of their current and future opportunities (Blumberg, 2007).

The first time a female character is mentioned in the 10th grade textbook is in the section regarding martyrology. The story of Shushanik Vardeni Mamikonian, written by Jacob of Tsurtavi 5th century religious writer. Shushanik, who refused to convert to Zoroastrianism after her husband's conversion, eventually dies. "Shushanik has become a model of an Armenian woman and mother who heroically fights for her native faith and freedom" (Bakhchinyan and Sarinyan, 2014, p. 21). This sentence was in bold font in the textbook the other parts in bold font are either names, or important literary terms.

Another example of female description is in another passage. In the section about "the Daredevils of Sassoun," an 8th century Armenian epic poem. The author of the textbook analyzed each main character of the poem in separate paragraphs. All the female characters were included in a paragraph named "the Armenian woman." The description of an Armenian woman by the author of the textbook goes as "She is beautiful, wise, sensitive, decent and always ready

to sacrifice her life for the homeland, family and children” (Bakhchinyan and Sarinyan, 2014, p. 55) It’s important to mention that this epic poem is considered to symbolized the combination of characteristics specific to Armenians. The characters, especially the main one David of Sassoun or Sasuntsi Davit, were meant to encourage the coming generations to be bold and strong.

Women are usually described with the words such as: “beautiful”, “modest”, “dedicated to the country, faith and family” “wise” (the undertone of “wisdom” as someone who is experienced rather than tactical). One of the complimentary words to use for Armenian women is “virgin” («ԿՈՆԼԵ») which is commonly used in Armenian literature as well as in the textbooks. In Armenian society till this day the virginity of the woman symbolizes pureness which in itself is the idealistic characteristic. Women are supposed to be virgins until they get married and if they’re not, regardless of the reason, they are considered to be “dirty” and “shameful”. In contrast, there’s no any indicative words related to sexuality or virginity when it comes to male characters. While men as male protagonists are described as “strong,” “courageous” “warrior” (Bakhchinyan and Sarinyan, 2014, p. 40)

The Armenian government has signed various international agreements managed by the United Nations that emphasize the importance of gender equality in education like Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All (EFA). Additionally, in 2010 Armenia passed the Gender Policy Concept Paper that includes gender-issue related principles and policies to be applied in different fields including education. The forming of new education curricula that will be firmly based on gender equality and elimination of patriarchal gender stereotypes is emphasized throughout the Gender Policy paper. Though the agreements and policy papers are a step towards ensuring gender equality in all aspects of education be it employee recruitment, policy/decision making process in educational

spheres as well as portrayal of female/male characters in the books, the Armenian government's intent has not been fully put into practice. In a discussion, the head of the National Institute of Education Aram Nazaryan, said that after independence the textbooks for public schools were based on the same criteria used during the Soviet Union era (as cited in Hovnanyan, 2017). In 2005, the government created new criteria that we have today. In the Soviet Union the information and communication were highly censored but they had female authors like Zabel Yesayan or Sybil in literature textbooks. Though we have complete freedom today, we still choose to follow outdated, sexist principles for the curricula (Hovnanyan, 2017).

Subject	Women	Men
Social Science	17.5%	82.4%
Social Science (10 th grade)	18.4% (120)	81.6% (531)
Social Science (11 th grade)	16.4% (53)	83.6% (269)
Social Science (12 th grade)	17.9% (103)	82.1% (472)
Armenian History	4.2%	95.8%
Armenian History (10 th grade)	5.8% (28)	94.2% (450)
Armenian History (11 th grade)	2.5% (20)	97.5% (769)
Armenian History (12 th grade)	4.5% (29)	95.5% (625)
Armenian Literature	19.5%	80.5%
Armenian Literature (10 th grade)	18.9% (316)	81.1% (1358)
Armenian Literature (11 th grade)	19.9% (342)	80.1% (1376)
Armenian Literature (12 th grade)	19.8% (744)	80.2% (596)

Source: Silova, I. (2016) Frequency of Representation of Female and Male Personalities and Characters in Textbooks

The research regarding various textbooks in Armenia shows that school textbooks are highly preferential of men in all fields where they are represented, including texts and pictures. The table above indicates that for instance in the social science and Armenian literature

textbooks, male personas are represented over 4 times more frequently than females (Silova, 2016).

Objectivity vs. Subjectivity

There's no absolute objectivity when it comes to textbooks. Either one way or another when talking about literature, describing the authors or asking questions there are going to be hints of subjective opinion of the editors. Even judging the degree of objectivity is already subjective. However, the way in which the Armenian literature textbooks are articulated and structured is clearly subjective which is backed up by the common features mentioned above.

The structure of all the books is as follows: the author's biography, works, a specific work(s) that is considered to be the most influential or the most famous one. After the summary of the literary work's plot and structure, there's the "notion" or "the moral lessons," analysis of the characters. In the 10th grade textbook in the analysis for the epic poem of "The Daredevils of Sassoun" there's a separate passage called "Armenian woman" as an indication of the standard ideal of female role in Armenian society. The textbook author later says "The characters of the epic poem carry the main features of Armenian nation's character" (Bakhchinyan and Sarinyan, 2014, p. 57).

Basically the literary works are analyzed in detail. There's no space left for discussions, critical thinking for the students. Each character is analyzed based on the editor's opinion. There are no sources indicating that the writers themselves intended to portray the characters in a certain way. Obviously as mentioned above the female characters are highly underrepresented. There are only small passages discussing women of the literary works if there are any. The characters or the authors are often described with complimentary words. Whether the usage of

adjectives of praise is too subjective is debatable. Grigor Narekatsi is a “genius,” Khorenatsi’s works may be “bright luminous praise” («պայծառ լուսերգութիւն») (Bakhchinyan and Sarinyan, 2014, p. 34).

While the presence of females among the editors doesn’t guarantee more equal representation of Armenian literature it is important to note that from the three textbooks with 2 editors each (total of 6) only one is a woman which is for the 12th grade. As mentioned the 12th grade literature textbook contains more female writers compared to the other two.

Diversity and Contemporary writers

By including works of Armenian contemporary writers into the school educational system, students will get the opportunity to discuss the growth and the potential development of Armenian literature. It will also create a vision for students to see the future of Armenian literature. But most importantly contemporary literature touches upon subjects that are relevant to the times we live in and addresses questions that the current Armenian society deals with. One of the famous examples is the Armenian best-seller “Goodbye, Bird” («Յտետութիւն ծիւն») by Aram Pachyan, which raises many questions about the ambivalent nature of the Armenian army. Many writers like Gurgen Khanjyan and Hambardzum Hambardzumyan touched upon the subject of post-soviet Armenia and how it shaped the Armenian society.

Textbooks should provide open and free space to students to express and critically examine works of literature. But the current literature textbooks focus more on creating a romanticized reality for the portrayal of Armenian canonical writers. So, the main focus here should be the perception of Armenian reality through the lenses of contemporary literature, which students can discuss and even relate to. On the other hand, schools are strong institutions

that can support the thrive of the community of Armenian thinkers, who play an important role in shaping a modern society.

In the interview Sona Mnatsakanyan pointed out three things that she noticed while teaching and generally observing the overall condition of literature in Armenia.

She first pointed out about the awareness of modern Armenian literature. “I have the impression that most of the audience is not really aware that we have Armenian literature today. In fact it is in a pretty good condition” (personal communication, April 12, 2020). In other words, we have very good writers, there is an active, independent field compared to what is happening in other post-Soviet countries. But most students are not aware of it, and literature, in their minds, is a realm of the dead. In other words, a person must be dead in order to be considered a writer.

Another problem is that dead writers are stuck on the pedestal. Even when talking about Raffi or Hakob Paronyan which are very familiar names and of course because they are canonical authors, we see them everywhere: the street names, statues in everything. They are in our consciousness, but they are still static figures in our minds, their works are not alive. “When you want to analyze him from your point of view, approach it in a new way, it becomes very difficult because the students already have a certain image of Raffi in their minds” says Mnacakanyan.

Finally, Mnatsakanyan says that there’s no awareness of diaspora writers among the students as well which can also be connected to the idea that the streets are named mostly after canonical authors. The statues that we have in the city, are also representing only canonical writers. Because of that they are automatically in the minds of the people, but only about 30% of

the students might know Kostan Zarian, Shahan Shahnur [diasporan authors] even though they are included in the school curriculum. In the textbooks, few of the diasporan writers are included such as Rouben Melik, Vahe Katcha, Alicia Giragossian. When it comes to other contemporary writers, the small passage of the 12th grade textbook includes few names like Levon Khechoyan, Gurgen Khanjyan. None of their literary works are included, just names.

Limitations and avenues for future research

Although this research aimed to showcase the core problems there are many more problems that should be researched further, for instance focus on poetry in the textbooks and how they are represented. As mentioned because of the coronavirus pandemic the research (surveys, interviews) were limited. Further interviews should be conducted with school teachers, publishing houses, authors of the textbooks as well as representatives of the Ministry of Education in Armenia to understand how the curriculum is created.

In the future, research should be done based on the textbooks of other grades. Since Armenian literature is told in colleges as well, it would be good to research the way they are taught there as well. These further research would give better idea about the preference of the chosen authors, works and topics discussed as well as the transition of the teaching methods. Moreover, research should be conducted regarding the teaching methods and the class process separately to understand how the textbooks are used by the teachers and the students.

Finally, Armenian public high schools have separate classes based on subjects e.g. humanitarian studies, physics and mathematics, economics, chemistry and biology. Course program is based on the chosen program and focused on the subjects that are mandatory for each one. Thus, the hours of the Armenian literature course are more for students in humanitarian studies, than for economics class. The literature textbooks are different as well however, there is little difference. There are two types of Armenian literature textbooks: the one for humanitarian studies and science based studies. For further research each textbook should be analyzed separately in reference to each program. As mentioned regarding the textbooks analyzed in this

research paper 10th and 12th grade textbooks are used for humanitarian studies while the 11th grade textbook is for science based programs.

Conclusion

Canonical and non-canonical literature has been one of the most discussed topics in the field of education and literature itself. Non-canonical literature includes everyone and everything that is outside of what's accepted to be the representative image of a certain country's literature. Literature is the way we perceive the world. It carries culture, society, history. Since literature is one of the primary subjects in Armenian school, and the literature textbooks are the main guides both for the teachers and the students, it follows that literature can have an important impact in shaping students' worldviews. In order to provide quality education and develop critical thinking in the minds of the students it is important to represent Armenian literary reality accurately. This research based on the textbooks of 10th, 11th and 12th grades showed that a proper representation of literature is lacking. The structure of the books is dull, outdated; the exercises included at the end of the units do not encourage critical thinking or creativity, most of the biographies are more fact-based, mostly focused on dry facts rather than providing insight in the authors' life. Another problem was the complete ignorance towards female writers. There are only a few female writers included in the last pages of the 12th grade textbook. They are described with just a passage or two while canonical male writers occupy at least 10 pages. Besides the fact that male authors drastically outnumber the female writers, there's also inequality and sexist portrayal of female characters. The illustrations are mostly of men, while the ones where females are represented, they are either behind men or the image is in abstract style. Male characters are typically described as strong, smart, strategic, heroic and adventurous while female characters are passive, submissive and are only associated with motherhood or stereotypical wifely duties. There's a blurry line between the authors' representations of the female characters and the descriptions of the textbook authors. Thus, if the textbook includes

female characters that are mostly submissive and men that are heroic, is it the original writer's issue or the authors of the textbooks? Since the literary works are already analyzed in detail in the textbooks there's a danger of subjective opinion or bias. The analysis of the female/male characters already indicate the subjectivity of the editors. Lastly, lack of diversity is also present. There is little to no information about contemporary writers and diasporan writers. Because of these factors mentioned above, the students develop a certain static idea about literature, that is canonical. The literature scope is limited in the minds of the students, thus while growing up and learning they have a specific image about Armenian literature, which is preferred by the education system. The poems should always rhyme, the female characters are always submissive, or the literary text should always be written in a formal language. The education system should carry out a big research and completely change the curriculum in order to keep up with the modern times and standards. Thus, the students will develop better critical thinking skills, be open to new experiences in the learning process as well as art of literature and maybe many more of them will be inspired to become authors themselves.

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Appendices

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Figure 1: contents (10th grade Armenian literature textbook)

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Figure 3: contents (12th grade Armenian literature textbook)

1. Ո՞րն է առաքելության գաղափարը «Խորհրդավոր միանձնուհի» վեպում: Քույր Աննայի՝ հայ գյուղի բարեկարգման ծրագիրը:
2. Ի՞նչ ընթացք ունեցավ առաքելության գաղափարը Մուրացանի հետագա ստեղծագործություններում («Լուսավորության կենտրոնը», «Նոյի ազդավր», «Առաքյալը»):
3. Յո՛ւյց տվեք «Անձնասիրության եսի» և «Հասարակաց եսի» ներքին պայքարը Պետրոս Կամսարյանի կերպարում:
4. Որո՞նք են «Գ-Լորգ Մարգպետունի» պատմավեպի սկզբնաղբյուրները:
5. Ի՞նչ կառուցվածք ունի «Գ-Լորգ Մարգպետունի» պատմավեպը:
6. Բացատրե՛ք շրջադարձի հոգեբանական լուծումները «Գ-Լորգ Մարգպետունի» վեպի հերոսների ներաշխարհում (Սահականույշ, Սահակ Սևադա, Յիկ Ամրամ):
7. Բնութագրե՛ք Աշոտ Երկաթի կերպարը:
8. Գրե՛ք շարադրություն «Գ-Լորգ Մարգպետունու կերպարը որպես Մուրացանի իդեալների անձնավորում» թեմայով:

Figure 4: 10th grade Armenian literature textbook, p. 219

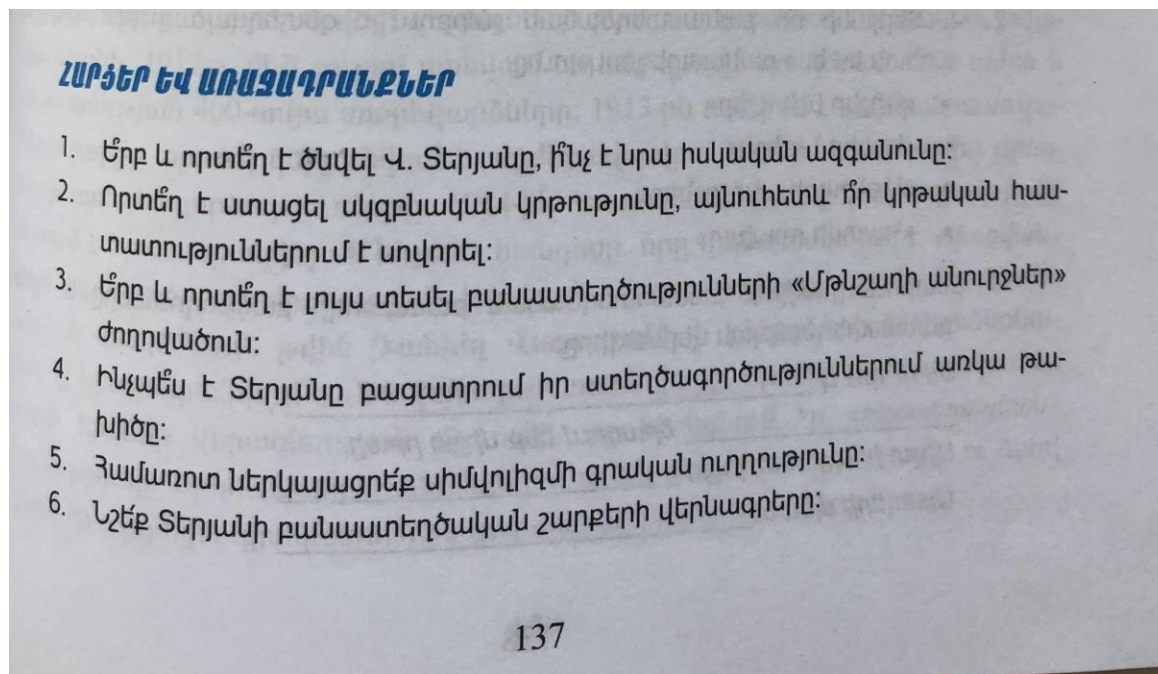


Figure 5: 11th grade Armenian literature textbook, p. 137

1. Ե՞րբ և որտե՞ղ է ծնվել Պարույր Սևակը: Որտե՞ղ է ստացել իր միջնակարգ և բարձրագույն կրթությունը: Ի՞նչ են տվել նրան ուսումնառության տարիները:
2. Ներկայացրե՛ք Սևակի կյանքի և գործունեության մոսկովյան շրջանը:
3. Պարույր Սևակի կյանքը և գործունեությունը հայրենիքում՝ Մոսկվայից վերադառնալուց հետո: Ողբերգական մահը:
4. Թվարկե՛ք Սևակի հիմնական ժողովածուների և պոեմների վերնագրերը:
5. Գրականագիտական ի՞նչ աշխատության և քննադատական ի՞նչ հոդվածների հեղինակ է Սևակը:
6. Ի՞նչ տեսական-գեղագիտական սկզբունքներ էր առաջադրում Սևակը բանաստեղծական նոր արվեստի համար: Ներկայացրե՛ք նրա ծրագրային բանաստեղծությունները և առանձին մտքեր «Հանուն և ընդդեմ «ռեալիզմի մախա-հիմքեր»-ի» հոդվածից: Ի՞նչ էր հասկանում բանաստեղծը *համանվագայնություն (սիմֆոնիզմ)* ասելով:
7. Ի՞նչ էք հասկանում *քաղաքացիական քնարերգություն* ասելով: Ներկայացրե՛ք ժամանակակից մարդու կերպարն ըստ Սևակի «Մարդը ափի մեջ» շարքի: Ինչ-պիսի՞ մարդու պահանջ ուներ ժամանակը:
8. Ինչպե՞ս էր Սևակը պատկերում դարի բարոյական կերպարը: Նշե՛ք համապատասխան շարքերը «Եղիցի լույս» գրքից և առանձնացրե՛ք առավել բնութագրական «Պարապություն», «Դիմակահանդեսի գլխավորը», «Դարակեսի հիմ-նը», «Ճամփեզրի խոտը» բանաստեղծությունները:
9. Ներկայացրե՛ք Սևակի սիրային պոեմներն ու բանաստեղծությունները: Հոգեբանական ի՞նչ վիճակներ են բնորոշ Սևակի սիրային քնարերգությանը:
10. Ներկայացրե՛ք Սևակի հայրենասիրական բանաստեղծությունները:
11. «Անընդի զանգակատուն» պոեմի գրության հանգամանքները: Մինչև պոեմը գրելը ի՞նչ մտորումներ և ապրումներ է ունեցել բանաստեղծը: «Անընդի զանգակատուն» պոեմի բնույթն ու բովանդակությունը:
12. Ինչպե՞ս կմեկնաբանեք «Անընդի զանգակատուն» պոեմի երաժշտական կառուցվածքը՝ *զանգակատուն, համազանգ, դողանջ...* Ինչքանո՞վ են դրանք բխում իր իսկ առաջ քաշած համանվագայնության պահանջից:
13. Ինչպե՞ս կմեկնաբանեք այն միտքը, ըստ որի՝ Կոմիտասն իր կերպարով խորհրդրդանշում է հայ ժողովրդին:
14. Ինչպե՞ս է Կոմիտասի կերպարի մեջ Սևակը միավորել ժողովրդի պատմությունը:
15. Ինչպե՞ս է Պարույր Սևակը «Եվ այր մի՛ Մաշտոց անուն» պոեմում կերտել Մեսրոպ Մաշտոցի կերպարը: Ինչպե՞ս է միաձուլվել ժողովրդի պատմական բախրուտը և անհատի ճակատագիրը:
16. Բնորոշե՛ք Սևակի տեղն ու դերը նորագույն շրջանի հայ գրականության մեջ:

Figure 6: 12th grade Armenian literature textbook, p. 139

է: Դասերի միավորողը «բարոյական դաշինքն է», և ուժեղ ու անպարտելի է այն ազգը, որի դասերը միավորված են բարոյական դաշինքով: «Թեոդորոս Ռշտունի» վեպի վերջաբանում Շերենցը հայ երիտասարդությանն ուսուցանում է պատմության դասը. «ժողովրդյան միաբանության ոգի և ուսումնարան՝ այս երկու բան կարող են հայ ազգին կենդանության շունչ բերել»:

Ռոմանտիկական սոցիալական վեպը ուրույն խնդիրներով բովանդակավորեց **Սյրուսի Տյուսաբը** (1841-1901): Նրա երեք վեպերը՝ «Մայտա», «Սիրանուշ», «Արաքսիա կամ Վարժուհին», ֆեմինիստական շարժման առաջին արձագանքներն են հայ գրականության մեջ: Գրական շրջաններում նրան անվանում էին «*հայկական ժորժ Սանդ*»: Կնոջ ազատության խնդիրն իր դրվածքով, ըստ Տյուսաբի, համաշխարհային է: Տյուսաբի համոզմամբ՝ միայն սեռերի հավասարության պարագայում է հնարավոր ստեղծել իդեալական հասարակություն. քանզի այստեղ է ընտանիքի, այսինքն՝ «ընկերության հիմքի» կայունությունը:

Հայ մտավոր մշակույթի պատմության երևելի անուններից է **Գարեգին Արվանձտյանը** (1840-1892): Նա հայտնագործեց մի նոր «աշխարհ»՝ հայ բանահյուսությունը: Շրջագայելով պատմական Հայքի գավառներով՝ նա ժողովրդի հիշողության ակունքներից վեր հանեց ազգագրական մատուցներ և կազմավորեց մի անզուգական մատենաշար՝ «Գրոց ու բրոց», «Հնոց և նորոց», «Մանանա», «Թորոս Աղբար», «Համով հոտով», որոնք հիմնադրեցին մի անկրկնելի դարոց հայ բանահյուսության պատմության մեջ: Արվանձտյանի անվան հետ է կապվում հայոց ազգային էպոսի առաջին գրառումը՝ «Սասունցի Դավիթ կամ Միերի դուռ» պատումը: Արվանձտյանը իր մատյաններն անվանել է «*Հայաստանի մրգաստանեն քաղած մատուցներ*»:

1880-ականների երկրորդ կեսին գրական ասպարեզ է իջնում արևմտահայ գրողների իրապաշտ (ռեալիստ) սերունդը, որի ականավոր դեմքերն էին Արփիար Արփիարյանը, Տիգրան Կամսարականը, Գրիգոր Ձոհրապը, Լևոն Բաշալյանը և ուրիշներ:

Արփիար Արփիարյանի (1851-1908) գրական գործունեությունն ընդգրկում է երեք բնագավառ՝ գրական քննադատություն, իրապարակախոսություն և գեղարվեստական արձակ:

Պատմվածքների առաջին ժողովածուն լույս է տեսել 1885-ին՝ «Կյանքի պատկերներ» խորագրով, և ընդգրկում է «Դատապարտյալը», «Երազի մը գինը», «Կատակ մը» պատմվածքները: Նույն խորագրի ներքո մամուլում լույս են տեսել նաև «Ապուշը», «Դերասանուհին» և այլ պատմվածքներ, ինչպես նաև՝ «Մինչև է՞րբ», «Ոսկի ապարանջան» վիպակները: Արփիարյանի գրեթե

Figure 7: 10th grade Armenian literature textbook, p. 124.

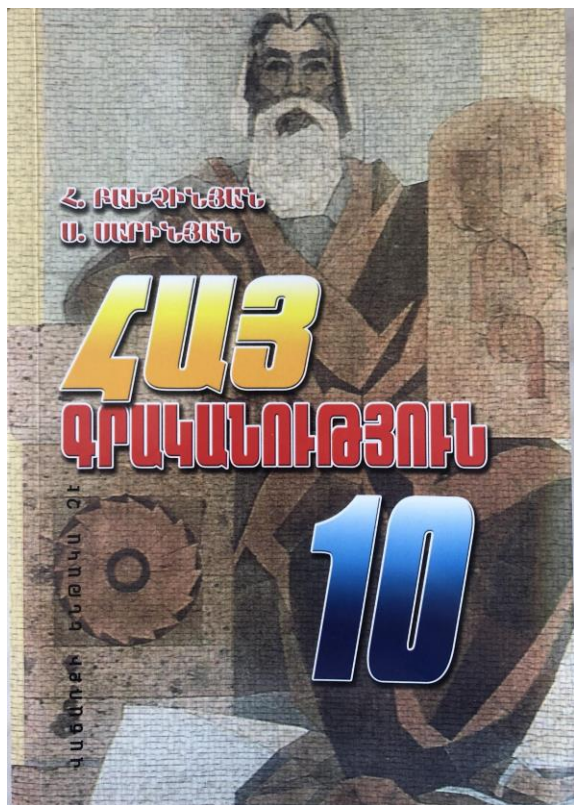


Figure 8: 10th grade cover page

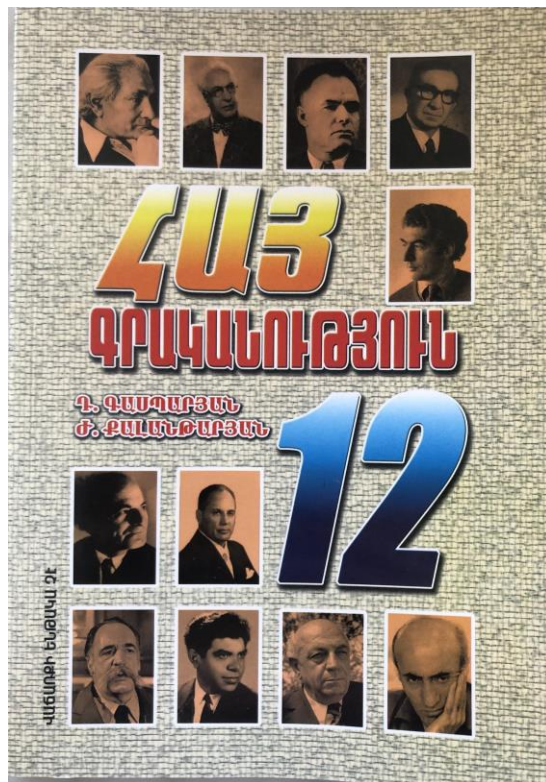


Figure 9: 12th grade cover page



Figure 10: 11th grade cover page(Science)

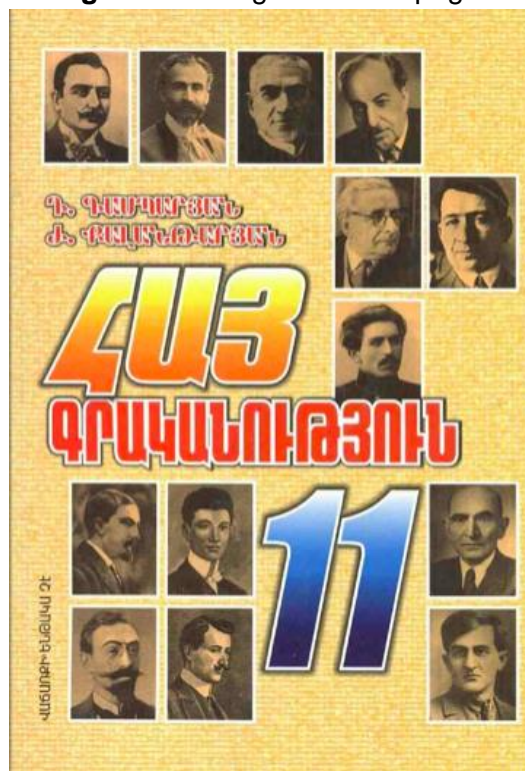


Figure 11: 11th grade cover page

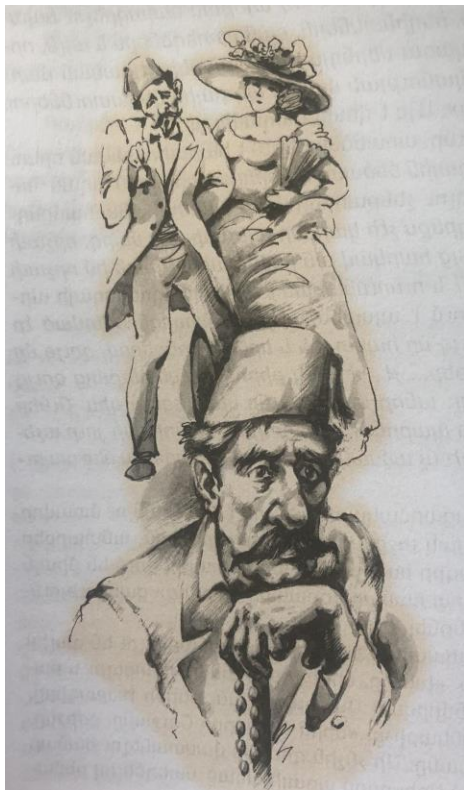


Figure 12:

grade Armenian literature textbook

Figure 13: 10th grade Arm. lit. textbook



10th



Figure 14: 10th grade Armenian literature textbook, p. 218

CONSENT FORM

Consent to participate in a capstone project conducted at the American University of Armenia (AUA). This is to state that I agree to participate in the capstone project conducted by Arusyak Gharagozyan. The capstone director is Dr. Hourig Attarian of the College of Humanities & Social Sciences at AUA (tel.: 060 612769, email: hourig.attarian@aua.am).

PURPOSE: I have been informed that the purpose of the project is to understand the preference for canonical literature taught at Armenian public schools. Within the larger context of the project, the interview conducted by Arusyak Gharagozyan is meant to focus on the analysis of Armenian literature textbooks.

PROCEDURES: I understand that the interview will be conducted in participants' homes or another appropriate place, and might be recorded on video. As a participant, I will be asked to explore topics regarding Armenian education system (high schools), Armenian literature and how it is represented, based on my experience. The interview will last from one to two hours, however, as a participant I am free to stop at any time, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the project at any given point. I understand that if I wish to extend the focus group for more than two hours, I will be provided that opportunity.

RISKS AND BENEFITS: I understand that the interview involves the sharing of my personal views and opinions, which will be treated with the utmost care and consideration. I have been informed that I am free to stop, take a break or discontinue at any time. There are no risks involved in partaking in this interview.

CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION: As a participant, I will have access to all the recorded material for verification purposes. Throughout the project, if and when the material produced is in Armenian, I will have the opportunity to review and verify the English translations.

I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at any time without negative consequences.

I understand that the data from this project may be published in print or digital format for academic purposes.

In terms of **identification and reproduction** of my participation:

I agree to **disclose my identity**. I understand that my identity may be revealed in any publications or presentations that may result from this interview.

I agree to the reproduction of sound and images from this interview by any method and in any media for academic purposes (which may include webpages, documentary clips, etc..)

OR

I understand that my participation in this study is **confidential**. My identity will be concealed. I will be given a pseudonym in any publications or presentations that may result from this interview.

I agree that while data from my interview may be published, no sound or images from it may be reproduced.

When photographs, artifacts or documents are scanned or photographed

I agree to let the student researcher copy family photographs and documents for use in the student project only.

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT. I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

INTERVIEWEE:

NAME (please print) _____

SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

INTERVIEWER:

NAME (please print) _____

SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

If at any time you have questions about your rights as a capstone project participant, please contact Dr. Hourig Attarian of the College of Humanities & Social Sciences at AUA (tel.: 060 612769, email: hourig.attarian@aua.am).

Interview Questions

1. Do you have any experience with high school students? Have you taught at high school?

Ունե՞ք որևէ փորձ ավագ դպրոցի աշակերտների հետ: Դասավանդե՞լ եք ավագ դպրոցում:

2. Could you describe the class process? What's the standard way of teaching a literature course at high schools? Was yours any different? How?

Կարո՞ղ եք նկարագրել դասընթացի պոռոցերը: Ո՞րն է ավագ դպրոցներում գրականություն դասավանդելու ստանդարտ կամ ընդունված ձևը: Արդյո՞ք ձեր դասավարման ձևաչափն ուրիշ էր: Ինչպե՞ս:

3. What are some of the flaws/omissions in literature textbooks in your opinion?

Ձեր կարծիքով ո՞րն է մեր ներկայիս գրականության դասագրքերի թերությունները / բացթողումները:

4. There's the curriculum that's assigned by the ministry of education. Did you have a separate, your own program (writers, literary works) that you thought would be more interesting to students or beneficial (encourage dialogues, debates, develop critical thinking)?

Կա ուսումնական պլան, որը նշանակված է կրթության նախարարության կողմից: Դուք ունե՞ք առանձին, ձեր սեփական ծրագիրը (գրողներ, գրական

ստեղծագործություններ), որոնք կարծում եք, որ ավելի հետաքրքիր կլինեն ուսանողների համար կամ օգտակար (երկխոսություններ խրախուսի, բանավեճեր, զարգացնելով քննադատական մտածողությունը):

5. We see that very often the writers included in the school books are represented inside a specific frame, e.g. they are very patriotic, noble, smart, righteous. What's the point of creating this specific image in the minds of the students? What is this idealistic image meant to encourage in your experience or perspective?

Մենք տեսնում ենք, որ շատ հաճախ դպրոցական գրքերում ընդգրկված գրողները ներկայացված են հատուկ շրջանակի ներսում, օրինակ. նրանք շատ հայրենասեր են, <<ազնվական>>, խելացի, արդար: Ո՞րն է ուսանողների մտքում այս հատուկ պատկերը ստեղծելու իմաստը: Ձեր փորձից ելնելով կամ Ձեր կարծիքով ինչ խրախուսական նպատակ ունի այդ իդեալական պատկերը:

6. We are talking about non-canonical literary works which are works outside of what seems to be representation of Armenian literature, say works of female writers, literary works that explore themes of mental health, drugs, sexuality. Some people would think that these topics are too taboo especially for “young kids” (high school students). What and who makes the canon? Why are the works of female authors supposed to be alternative and non-canonical?

Մենք խոսում ենք ոչ canonical գրական ստեղծագործությունների մասին: Այն ստեղծագործությունները որոնք «հայ գրականություն», ներկայացուցիչ

գրականությունից դուրս են օրինակ կին գրողների ստեղծագործություններ, գրական ստեղծագործություններ, որոնք ուսումնասիրում են հոգեկան առողջության, թմրանյութերի, սեռականության թեմաները: Ոմանք կարծում են, որ այս թեմաները չափազանց տաքու են հատկապես «երիտասարդ երեխաների» համար (ավագ դպրոցի աշակերտներ): Ի՞նչ և ով է թելադրում կանոնը: Ինչու՞ են կին հեղինակների գործերը ենթադրվում այլընտրանքային և ոչ կանոնական:

7. In the three textbooks (grades 10-12) we see female writers only in the 12th grade, at the end of the book. How would you comment on that? What does this blaring omission signify in your opinion? why these particular authors and not others for example.

Երեք դասագրքերում (10-12 դասարաններ) կին գրողներ տեսնում ենք միայն 12-րդ դասարանում ` գրքի վերջում: Ինչպե՞ս կմեկնաբանեք դա: Ի՞նչ է նշանակում ձեր կարծիքով այդ բացթողումը: Ինչու հենց այս հատուկենտ հեղինակները օրինակ Սիլվա Կապուտիկյան, Մարո Մարգարյան, Մարիետա Շահինյան, Ալիսիա Կիրակոսյան, Ֆեխա Գուլումճյան, Ռոզալինա Սիմոնյան, Սևդա Սևան և ոչ թե օրինակ ուրիշները:

8. what would you want to see in a high school textbook? What is your dream curriculum and why?

Ինչ կցանկանայիք տեսնել ավագ դպրոցի դասագրքում: Ո՞րն է ձեր երազանքի ուսումնական ծրագիրը և ինչու:

